



# SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

## GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Interim Guidelines about Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) For Cruise Ship Passengers and Crew Members

#### Background:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is tracking reports of outbreaks of a respiratory illness called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Because the outbreak has affected international travelers who have recently visited mainland China; Hong Kong; Singapore; and Hanoi, Vietnam, CDC issued a travel advisory for people traveling from those areas ([http://www.cdc.gov/travel/other/acute\\_resp\\_syn\\_multi.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/other/acute_resp_syn_multi.htm)). You can learn more about SARS at the [CDC web site](#) and [the World Health Organization \(WHO\) web site](#). These websites are updated continually as new information about SARS and the areas affected is learned.

The primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person-to-person contact. Most cases of SARS have involved people who cared for or lived with someone with SARS, or had direct contact with infectious material (for example, respiratory secretions) from a person who has SARS. Potential ways in which SARS can be spread include touching the skin of other persons or objects that are contaminated with infectious droplets and then touching the eye, nose, or mouth. This can happen when someone who is sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets onto themselves, other persons, or nearby surfaces. It is also possible that SARS can be spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are currently not known.

International and domestic conveyances, including cruise ships, have been asked to report suspect cases of SARS to U.S. public health authorities. Since the beginning of the SARS epidemic, the cruise industry and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have a shared interest in preventing SARS from being introduced on cruise ships, and controlling its spread when it is inadvertently introduced, to protect the health of the traveling public and the crew members who live and work on the ship.

#### General hygiene:

As with all infectious illnesses, the first line of defense is careful hand hygiene. As a general rule, it is good practice to wash hands frequently with soap and water; if hands are not visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand rubs may be used as an alternative.

#### Management of possible cases of SARS during a cruise:

The interim U.S. case definition of SARS is available at the following website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/casedefinition.htm>. If a passenger or crew member on a cruise ship who has traveled from or transited through one of the areas listed above becomes ill with a respiratory illness consistent with SARS, that person should be isolated from the other passengers and crew members as much as possible. Cruise ship personnel and close contacts of this person should follow the recommendations for close contacts of SARS cases outlined on the following website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/ic-closecontacts.htm>. Health-care personnel aboard the ship should follow recommendations for health-care personnel described on the following website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/clinicians.htm>.

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If a suspect SARS case is identified aboard a ship, the captain of the ship should immediately report the illness to the nearest U.S. Quarantine Station ([http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/quarantine\\_stations.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/quarantine_stations.htm)). This reporting is required by law. If the ship will not be arriving imminently at a U.S. port, Quarantine health authorities will assist ship officials with the management and isolation of the suspect case and the recommendations among other passengers and crew members. When the ship arrives, Quarantine officials will arrange for appropriate medical assistance to be available and assist with the provision of information for other passengers and crew members.

### **While in areas affected by SARS:**

Be aware of the symptoms described in (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/factsheet.htm>). If you become ill and you are concerned about SARS, seek medical attention from the cruise ship medical personnel. If additional medical attention is required, and you do not have information about a local health-care provider in the country you are visiting, you can contact the U.S. embassy or consulate to ask about finding a health-care provider. Limit your contact with others as much as possible to help prevent the spread of any infectious illness you may have. CDC does not recommend the routine use of masks or other personal protection equipment while in public.

### **When you return home from areas affected by SARS:**

CDC health officials or their local designees handing out travel alert cards to people returning from areas affected by SARS. A copy can be found at: ([http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel\\_alert.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel_alert.htm)). If you return home and become sick, see your health-care provider as soon as possible and tell him/her about your symptoms and the countries you visited.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars) or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (Español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY)

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